

TIMES AND TRAILS

People, Projects and Priorities at Environment and Conservation

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In Vision

Environment and Conservation Employees:

On Wednesday the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund held its second official meeting, and we hosted the Governor's Land and Water Forum II at Montgomery Bell State Park. Representatives from more than 40 agencies, foundations, land trusts and other related conservation organizations came together to hear from Governor Bredesen and discuss progress on various efforts to conserve significant lands in Tennessee. Right now we have a tremendous opportunity, possibly once in a lifetime, for significant conservation advancements in Tennessee. I believe we can convert these opportunities into greater protection and improvement for our land, air and water. Future generations will benefit because of what we are willing and able to do today.



Commissioner Jim Fyke

Paul Sloan and I have also been spending time on Capitol Hill sharing the department's budget for the next fiscal year with legislators. Our budget reflects the significant amount of resources we are putting toward important environmental programs and conservation activities. We both appreciate this opportunity to share our department's priorities and performance as we protect the quality of the air, land and water for Tennessee. Working with the General Assembly, we continually reinforce our budgetary objectives for operating a responsive, efficient regulatory system with an emphasis on safeguarding human health and the environment for all Tennesseans.

Legislators are always very interested in the management of our 54 State Parks and 69 Natural Areas. They know our park system supports a high quality of life, is a fantastic tourist attraction and showcases our state's ecological diversity. These sites protect and promote our state's natural, cultural and historical heritage and provide a variety of recreational services through local partnerships.

As we prepare to celebrate the 35th anniversary of Tennessee's State Natural Areas this year and the 70th anniversary of Tennessee State Parks in 2007, I am pleased our elected officials and the general public are demonstrating such a high level of concern for the quality and accessibility of our outstanding state parks and natural areas. I have received numerous supportive comments about Governor Bredesen's proposal to remove the access fee program at 23 parks on July 1, 2006 while replacing that lost fee revenue with a \$924,000 budget improvement next year.

As I meet with legislators and the general public in the weeks ahead, I want you to know how much I appreciate your work and service to our state. The outside world really gets to know this department through your daily work in the field, in the central office and at our parks. Tennessee is a great place to live because of the difference you make each day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim", written in a cursive style.

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www.tdec.net

Administration and TDEC Take Action on 2006 Environmental Agenda

Governor Bredesen and the department are moving forward with an environmental agenda in 2006 to safeguard human health and the environment for all Tennesseans. Here are examples of recent Administration initiatives from the past few weeks:

The governor has formally requested the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) to conduct a new programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for coal mining in Tennessee. The last EIS for coal mining in Tennessee was done in 1985. A new EIS will help this federal agency recalibrate its permitting, monitoring and oversight processes to reflect new economic and production realities while also considering the present environmental condition of Tennessee lands impacted by mining.

The governor has shared Tennessee's preference with the Secretary of Interior regarding the completion of the North Shore Road along Fontana Dam in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Governor Bredesen is on record supporting the environmentally preferred option during public hearings set to resolve this issue. This option is a cash settlement that fulfills a long standing federal promise to Swain County, North Carolina without the negative environmental impact and \$600 million required to finish 30 miles of road through the national park.

The governor signed Executive Order 33 on February 14 establishing the Governor's Interagency Alternative Fuels Working Group and directing various state agencies to take actions that encourage the production, distribution and use of biofuels – ethanol (E85) and biodiesel (B20) – in Tennessee. The Department of Environment and Conservation will be one of six state agencies working with a host of stakeholders to promote and increase the use of biofuels in our state. These agency representatives will be reaching out to various organizations regarding how Tennessee can transform our energy and environmental challenges into economic opportunity, improved quality of life and greater national energy security.

"Because of continued budgetary discipline over the past three years, our state has truly turned the corner from fiscal crisis to financial stability," said Commissioner Fyke. "Tennessee can now sharpen its focus on key priorities like education, health care, jobs and land conservation."

This conservation priority is demonstrated in the governor's proposed budget for next year that includes the following items effecting our department:

- ◆ \$10 million for the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund
- ◆ \$24 million to fully restore the State Land Acquisition Funds
- ◆ Removal of access fees charged at 23 State Parks beginning July 1, 2006
- ◆ Creation of a Tennessee Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) to promote principles of conservation and environmental management among high school and college age Tennesseans
- ◆ \$15.7 million in new capital improvements for Tennessee State Parks

"This budget proposal and the governor's environmental agenda are good for Tennessee," said Commissioner Fyke. "As I present the department's budget and these improvements to legislators, I am getting a lot of positive feedback about the direction we are moving to protect and improve our land, air and water."



Commissioner Fyke speaks to business leaders and legislators at a recent forum involving the Governor's Jobs Cabinet.

Department Unveils New Web Sites for State Parks and Tennessee Golf Trail

The department recently completed a redesign for the Tennessee State Parks Web site to help visitors better find information about the wide variety of features and activities offered at 54 state parks across Tennessee. Along with a new look, feel and functionality for the State Parks' Web site, a comprehensive new Web presence has also been developed for the Tennessee Golf Trail. Both Web sites were redesigned in-house by the TDEC Web director Scott Andrews and the Web Team at no outside cost to taxpayers.

Key improvements at (www.tnstateparks.com) include:

- ◆ The "Find-a-Park" pages allow each park to highlight their specific activities more efficiently – a Web visitor only needs to make one click on an activity icon to get information about that park's unique opportunities.
- ◆ The home page now spotlights future state park activities and present priorities. Current features include the Winter Discount Coupons, State Parks Running Tour, the Iris Fund, State Parks Gift Certificates and State Parks' award winning NRPA video.

New pages for the State Parks Web site include:

- ◆ The "Tennessee Golf Trail" site highlighting the 13 golf courses found at our state parks.
- ◆ The "Get Involved" page offering information about Friends of Tennessee State Parks groups.
- ◆ The "About Tennessee State Parks" page sharing our mission, values and strategic direction.
- ◆ The "Park Policies" page providing helpful policy guidance for park users.

In the near future we expect to make these Web site upgrades:

- ◆ Adding more photos of each park reflecting that park's cultural and natural uniqueness.
- ◆ Creating slideshows of accommodations, amenities, activities, educational programming plus cultural, historical and naturally significant features of each park.
- ◆ Designing and developing a searchable calendar of state park events and activities.



"Governor Bredesen has made state parks a priority, and these new Web sites better reflect the quality, accessibility and features of our nationally-recognized system of state parks," said Commissioner Jim Fyke.

At www.tngolftail.net, detailed information is available about the Tennessee Golf Trail, including four Bear Trace courses where Tennessee State Parks assumed management responsibility in December 2005. Rates have recently been reduced by as much as 20 percent for the four courses located at Chickasaw, Cumberland Mountain, Harrison Bay and Tims Ford State Parks.

"One of our top priorities since assuming the management of these four Bear Trace courses has been to generate more interest and play at these sites. By lowering the cost of playing the Bear Trace, we believe more people – both nearby and far away – will seek a championship golf experience set in the natural beauty of Tennessee State Parks," said Jim Webb, golf director for Tennessee State Parks.

"The internet continues to grow as one of the main tools people use to learn about Tennessee State Parks," concluded Commissioner Fyke. "These new Web sites will make it easier for people to quickly find helpful information and plan their next visit to a Tennessee State Park."



Tennessee's Andrew Swisher Named National Winner of EPA Radon Action Month Poster Contest

The U.S. EPA designated January as National Radon Action Month as part of a focused effort to educate Americans about the radon health threat. Our department works in concert with federal, state, local and volunteer organizations to promote awareness of the health risk posed by radon and prevent its potentially harmful consequences.

The department's Division of Air Pollution Control joined the University of Tennessee's Extension Service, the U.S. EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to sponsor the state's 2006 State Radon Poster Contest to raise awareness of radon, the importance of testing homes and fixing elevated levels.

Andrew Swisher, a 7th grade student at Norris Middle School in Anderson County, was named winner of the 2006 State Radon Poster contest. Andrew then advanced to the nationwide competition and was declared the overall winner of the EPA National Radon Action Month Poster Contest. In recognition of this achievement Andrew and his family traveled to Washington, D.C. on January 27 to accept this national level honor from the U.S. EPA.



U.S. EPA Deputy Administrator Marcus Peacock recognizes Andrew Swisher, 7th grade student at Norris Middle School in Anderson County, as the 2006 EPA National Radon Action Month Poster Contest winner at a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Background on Radon

- ♦The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) estimates radon gas causes 20,000 deaths from lung cancer annually and ranks as the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking.
- ♦Tools are available to help protect citizens' health from this colorless, odorless and tasteless naturally occurring radioactive gas released in rock, soil and water.
- ♦Protecting citizens from elevated radon gas involves raising public awareness regarding the availability of simple, inexpensive, effective tests to determine the level of exposure in our homes, schools and other buildings.

For more information about the Tennessee Radon Program visit www.tdec.net/apc/radon.

Tennessee Historical Commission Accepting Nominations for 2006 Certificate of Merit Awards

The Tennessee Historical Commission is now accepting nominations for its Certificate of Merit Awards, which will be presented to individuals or groups who have worked to preserve Tennessee's cultural heritage during 2005.

The awards program is part of Historic Preservation Month set for the month of May 2006. Historic Preservation Month is sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Tennessee Historical Commission and other preservation organizations. The 2006 theme for Historic Preservation Month is "Sustain America: Vision, Economics and Preservation."

"Although Historic Preservation Month focuses primarily on efforts to preserve and restore historic structures, the Tennessee Historical Commission is also interested in recognizing activities in the areas of publication, commemoration, education, and any other efforts to preserve our history and heritage," said Herbert L. Harper, Tennessee Historical Commission Executive Director.

To make a nomination for a Certificate of Merit Award, please forward documentation by March 20, 2006, to the Tennessee Historical Commission, 2941 Lebanon Road, Nashville, Tennessee 37214.

For more information about the Certificate of Merit Award program, please contact the Historical Commission office at (615) 532-1550.

Tennessee State Parks Salutes the Life of Ranger Ross Pahnke

Tennessee State Parks suffered a terrible loss when Long Hunter State Park Ranger Ross Pahnke was killed in a tragic accident on February 9 when he was struck by a vehicle while retrieving his mail at home. "Those that worked with Ross throughout his career with State Parks share my great respect for him and his work," said Assistant Commissioner Mike Carlton. "His passing was felt acutely by our parks family. Commissioner Fyke and I ask that everyone in the department keep Sue and the rest of the Pahnke family in your thoughts and prayers."

Ross Pahnke began his career as a Tennessee State Park Ranger on January 1, 1996 as one of the original rangers at Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park. His previous experiences as a Jump Qualified veteran of the United States Army, a law enforcement officer and a historian made him uniquely qualified to serve as a park ranger at the Bicentennial Mall. Ross thrived as a park ranger because of his love for history and his desire to understand and interpret history for others. He spent much of his free time visiting historical sites – from battlefield locations to Native American mounds – with his wife Sue. "Ross had a gift for remembering facts and enjoyed sharing his knowledge with others," said Long Hunter State Park manager Thurman Mullins. "He was continually seeking to learn all he could in order to deliver quality programming for park visitors. Ross was an outstanding guide, dedicated park ranger and committed family man. He will be missed by his many friends across Tennessee State Parks."

Flags were ordered flown at half mast in each of Tennessee's State Parks by Governor Bredesen as a tribute to Ranger Ross Pahnke and his family.



Long Hunter Park Ranger Ross Pahnke was a 10 year veteran of Tennessee State Parks. His death was a devastating loss for the entire State Parks family, but Ross will long be remembered for his committed service and numerous contributions to Bicentennial Capitol Mall and Long Hunter State Parks.

Mike Scott Named Ranger of the Year

Congratulations to Mike Scott of Norris Dam State Park for being selected Ranger of the Year based on his leadership and dedication to Tennessee State Parks, particularly in the area of environmental education. Mike was the driving force behind several new educational programs at Norris Dam State Park.



Mike Scott, Norris Dam State Park.

This award is sponsored by the Tennessee State Parks Ranger Association and presented annually. Nominations and votes come from within the ranger peer group of 210 uniformed officers.

Mike was chosen from an outstanding pool of nominees that included Pat Gagan, Roan Mountain State Park; Chris Hill, Natchez Trace State Park; Lance Crawford, Bledsoe Creek State Park; Jerome Cummins, Indian Mountain State Park; and the entire park ranger staff at Rock Island State Park: Danny McCullough, Jason Ramsey and Jodie Stenson. Congratulations to Mike and each of the rangers nominated for this recognition of professionalism and excellence.

Mark Norton Receives Preservation Award

Mark Norton, archaeologist with the Division of Archaeology, recently received the 2005 Preservation Award from the Alliance for Native American Indian Rights. This annual Preservation Award is bestowed to one non Native person in the state who provides a substantial contribution to the benefit of the Native American people of Tennessee through: (1) culturally significant site preservation, (2) public education, (3) legislative reform, or (4) public service. Past recipients of this award include State Senator Douglas Henry.

Alliance President Patrick Cummins stated that Mark was selected for this award due to his "heartfelt dedication and unwavering determination to preserve the sacred Pinson Mounds Archaeological Area. He is an outstanding professional member of Tennessee's archaeological community and his ongoing efforts toward the improved stewardship of the Pinson Mounds Archaeological Area is very much appreciated by the Native American citizens of Tennessee."

Times and Trails

Commissioner Fyke Helps Out During State Parks Night



Don Campbell, Rob Sherrill, Andy Lyon, Carolyn Williams, Commissioner Fyke, Philisa Bennett, Herb Roberts and David England pause for a photo at the Tennessee State Parks booth at a recent Lady Vols basketball game at Thompson-Boling Arena in Knoxville.

Coming Events

February 27: Commissioner Fyke delivers keynote address at the Alliance of the Cumberlands meeting at Cumberland Mountain State Park

March 9-10: Commissioner Fyke and Deputy Commissioner Sloan attend the East Tennessee Environmental Conference in Kingsport

April 3-9: Governor Bredesen proclaims Tennessee State Natural Areas Week

April 22: Earth Day

April 26: Governor Bredesen and Commissioner Fyke present TP3 Green Flag Performer Award to Bridgestone-Firestone's Warren County facility

Correction:

The photo on page 3 of the January Times and Trails should have identified the individuals from Red Clay State Historic Park as Park Ranger Carol Crabtree and Conservation Worker Jim Schuman.



People, Projects and Priorities

February Service Anniversaries

5 Years

Norma Branch, SWM, Memphis EFO
Dane Cutshaw, GWP, Johnson City EFO
Gabe Davis, GWP, Knoxville EFO
Doug Ezell, WPC, Central Office
Kim Graves, SWM, Central Office
Brian Murphy, GWP, Knoxville EFO
Pam Rudd, SWM, Knoxville EFO
Peter Vanhooose, Paris Landing State Park

10 Years

John Bain, DOE Oversight, Oak Ridge
Colleen Conzalina, UST, Central Office
Glenn Keller, DOE Oversight, Oak Ridge
Yvonne Means, Bledsoe Creek State Park
Mark Sweat, BOE, Knoxville EFO

15 years

Phillip Hendricks, APC, Central Office
Raymond Fox, Jr., GWP, Nashville EFO

20 years

David Engebretson, Frozen Head State Park
Lee Mansfield, BOE, Jackson EFO
Obioma Nkpa, Remediation, Central Office

25 years

Ken Bernhardt, Information Systems, Central Office
Larry Hancock, Pickwick Landing State Park
Jill Rose, Pickwick Landing State Park
Jeffery Horton, WPC, Johnson City EFO
Alan Wasik, Pickett State Park

30 years

Jerry Easley, Chickasaw State Park
Richard Tune, Tennessee Historical Commission

35 Years

Tommy Himes, Jr., SWM, Central Office

40 years

Billy Martin, Standing Stone State Park

Men acquire a particular quality by constantly acting a particular way...you become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions.

– Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC)

Highlights from the Office of General Counsel

Wilson Buntin Joins OGC as New Attorney

Wilson Buntin recently joined the TDEC Office of General Counsel (OGC) as the department's newest attorney. Before starting work with OGC, Wilson received a Masters in Environmental Law from the George Washington University School of Law in Washington, D.C. While in Washington reading for this degree, Wilson interned with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of General Counsel. Wilson also holds a law degree from the University of Memphis School of Law. As a lawyer in OGC, Wilson primarily handles enforcement cases in the areas of air, water, and underground storage tanks. Outside of enforcement cases, his job duties vary from assisting a division in writing policy statements to reviewing rules drafted by a division to ensure their legality.



Wilson Buntin

Protecting State Park Boundaries

The Office of General Counsel works with Tennessee State Parks when there is an encroachment on state property. While State Parks desires to be a good neighbor with all adjacent property owners and amicably resolve any outstanding boundary issues, the department must protect the integrity of our park boundaries. State park property is property for all to enjoy and the law requires the department to protect and preserve our boundaries. External agencies and major funding sources, such as the federal Land Water and Conservation Fund (LWCF), also hold the department accountable for maintaining our park boundaries as part of funding requirements.

Encroachments are often noticed by either park staff on patrol or other department personnel who deal with real property or survey issues. A typical encroachment is where a homeowner uses a driveway that crosses the state park boundary. The driveway may have been in use for years, possibly even before the park was established. Sometimes, the driveway was developed after the park, and the homeowner may or may not be aware of the adjacent park property boundary. In a few instances, encroachment occurs because the adjacent landowner may be "landlocked" and have no other access to his or her property except over park property.

There are several means to resolve an encroachment on state park property. Each way involves an open process where the encroaching party is approached by the department with facts, survey charts and maps in a non-threatening manner. One resolution method for encroachment is an easement. An easement is a formal legal document filed at the county courthouse that defines the driveway boundaries, acknowledges state

ownership of the driveway, but allows the homeowner use of the property as long as the home is used for a home-regardless of who owns it. Other resolution methods include simple permits and permission letters, which are often cheaper and easier to use, but are also legally binding.

"Encroachment and boundary issues are some of the most sensitive matters impacting State Parks and adjacent property owners," said David Henry, OGC attorney who deals with encroachment on park boundaries. "While each encroachment episode has its own unique facts and optimal resolution method, the Office of General Counsel will continue to make protecting the integrity of our State Parks a priority."



Gravel driveway in front of garage crosses boundary lines at Booker T. Washington State Park in Chattanooga. Department staff will be working with property owner to resolve this encroachment issue.

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State Parks Holds Annual In-Service Sessions

Two annual 2006 In-Service Training Sessions were held at Henry Horton State Park. Among the many training sessions was a program on the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Other programs that presented were the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement Services, Flexible Services and Great West Retirement Services who administers the Deferred Compensation Program. A free Wellness Screening was also held by the State Employees Wellness Program.



Left to right: Wayne Maddox, senior account executive, Maggellan Health Services, John Bowen, Mousetail Landing State Park, Lance Crawford, Bledsoe Creek State Park and Jeff Wells, Fort Loudoun State Historic Park. Mr Maddox explains the legal, financial and health benefits offered by the EAP program during the Breakout session.

Do you have a story idea or an article you would like to submit to *Times and Trails*? Please send suggestions and photos to newsletter@state.tn.us

People, Projects and Priorities

Call for Nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2006 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards. The awards recognize outstanding achievements by individuals, organizations, educational institutions and businesses for successful environmental projects and conservation measures.

The 2006 program will select one Governor's Award winner in each of the following categories:

Agriculture/Forestry
Aquatic Resource Preservation
Building Green
Energy Leadership
Environmental Education and Outreach
Green Schools
Greenways and Trails
Hazardous Waste
Lifetime Achievement
Natural Heritage Conservation
Parks and Recreation
Pollution Prevention

If you know of any individuals, organizations, educational institutions or businesses that may be candidates for these awards please take a few minutes to submit a nomination on their behalf before the deadline of March 31, 2006. For more information about submitting a nomination, including eligibility rules, past recipients, and nomination forms, please visit www.tdec.net/awards or send an email to tesa.awards@state.tn.us.



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